

NEWS RELEASE

**OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS**

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For Immediate Release

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Ronald J. Tenpas, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Illinois, announced today that on February 24, 2005, **EDWARD I. WUEBBELS**, age 43, of Albers, Illinois, pled guilty to the federal offenses of : **CONSPIRACY TO DEFRAUD THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD SAFETY INSPECTION SERVICE, TO USE A SIMULATION OF A UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE INSPECTION LEGEND WITHOUT AUTHORIZATION WITH THE INTENT TO DEFRAUD, AND TO TRANSPORT POULTRY PRODUCTS IN COMMERCE NOT PROPERLY INSPECTED WITH THE INTENT TO DEFRAUD**, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 371; **MAKING A FALSE STATEMENT TO THE FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION**, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1001. The offenses each carry a total maximum statutory penalty of up to ten (10) years' imprisonment, a fine of up to \$500,000, and up to three (3) years' supervised release. Sentencing has been set for June 10, 2005.

EDWARD L. WUEBBELS was employed as the Operations Manager for Lanter Company, a trucking/warehouse/distribution company in Granite City, Illinois. Lanter was under contract with the Illinois State Board of Education to store and deliver United States Department of Agriculture commodity food products to schools in the State of Illinois. As part of the plea, **WUEBBELS** admitted that he caused the illegal reboxing and repackaging of commodities chicken, and the fraudulent use of USDA inspection legends at Lanter Company. Some of the boxes of illegally reboxed commodities chicken were served to school children at the Laraway Elementary School in Will County, Illinois, which caused over 150 school children and teachers to become ill and required over 40 children and faculty to be transported by ambulance to area hospitals. **WUEBBELS** further admitted as part of the plea that he lied to a Department of Agriculture, Food Safety Inspection Service investigator following the incident and sought to obtain falsified shipping records concerning the commodities chicken.

The Plea follows an investigation conducted by the United States Department of Agriculture, Office of Inspector General-Investigations; the United States Department of Agriculture, Food Safety Inspection Service; and the United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Drug Administration. The prosecution of the case is being handled by Assistant United States Attorney Norman R. Smith.